

FORAGE SUITABILITY GROUP

Saline, Wet (EC 8 - 16 mmhos/cm)

FSG No.: GO32XY0010WY

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) : 32 - Northern Intermountain Desertic Basins

Physiographic Features

The area is an intermountain desertic basin with approximately half of the area being federally owned. The elevation ranges from 3,609 to 5,906 feet (1,100 to 1800 meters). Alluvial fans and slopes are the dominant landform between the mountains and the stream terraces. In some places the plains are eroded to the clay shale bedrock and there are areas of badlands.

Climatic Features

This area falls between the mountains and the valley areas. Annual precipitation ranges from 5 - 14 inches per year. Wide fluctuations may occur in yearly precipitation and result in more drought years than those with more than normal precipitation. Maximum precipitation occurs in the spring and the fall. The low and erratic precipitation provides only a small amount of water for growing crops. The Wind-Big Horn River and its tributaries bring irrigation water into the area from bordering mountains. Temperatures show a wide range between summer and winter. Winds are generally blocked from the basins by high mountains, but can occur in conjunction with an occasional thunderstorm.

There is a wide variation in temperature, predominantly due to the high elevation and dry air which permits rapid incoming and outgoing radiation, and the passage of both warm and cold air masses.

For further climatic information look in the Field Office Technical Guide, Section I, Climatic Data, or refer to the National Water and Climate Center web page at <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov>.

Soil Interpretations

This group consists of nearly level to gently sloping areas on flood plains, terraces, foot slopes and in upland swells. The soil texture can range from loamy fine sand to clay loam. The salts can occur in all or part of the soil profile. The concentration of soluble salts varies from place to place, but in all areas there usually is enough salts to restrict growth of most plants. Ground water is generally within the rooting depth of salt-tolerant plants during all or part of the growing season. The soils have an Electrical Conductivity (EC) of 8 to 16 mmhos/cm.

The soil survey maps were completed for the purposes of developing plans for tracts of land and can not be used to determine the soils on or the suitability of a specific site. Consequently, small areas of significantly different soils are not identified on the maps and may occur in any map unit.

Refer to Appendix A, Forage Suitability Group Rules in Section II, of the Field Office Technical Guide, Pastureland and Hayland Interpretations for the parameters used in grouping the soils.

Soil Map Unit List

For a complete listing of soil components and what Forage Suitability Group the soil is in, refer to Appendix B, Section II of the Field Office Technical Guide, Pastureland and Hayland Interpretations.

Adapted Species List

Refer to Appendix C, Adapted Species for Forage Suitability Groups in Section II of the Field Office Technical Guide, Pastureland and Hayland Interpretations.

Production Estimates

Production estimates are based on management intensity (fertility regime, irrigation water management, harvest timing, etc.) and should be considered as estimates only. The estimates should only be used for making general management recommendations. On site production information should always be used for making detailed planning and management recommendations when available.

5 - 9 Precipitation Zone

Irrigation: Not Suited

Dryland: The expected production for grass would be from 2,000 to 4,500 pounds per acre. Legumes are not suited.

10 - 14 Precipitation Zone

Irrigation: Not Suited

Dryland: The expected production for grass would be from 3,000 to 5,500 pounds per acre. Legumes are not suited.

Production on pastures in many instances is species dependent and depends if the pasture is a single species pasture or a mixture of grass species.

Forage Growth Curves

Refer to Appendix D, Section II of the Field Office Technical Guide, Pasture and Hayland Interpretations.

Management

The relationship between soils, vegetation and climate on any given site is historically driven by the ability of the plants to grow and change as conditions warrant and has allowed various species to express themselves naturally. Under agronomic conditions, production-enhancing practices have altered the original limits of the biomass production. The modification of growth factors, customized selection of species and wise use of a variety of management practices have the potential to produce yields and quality far superior to those found in the native state.

These soils when in forage management system should see organic matter at a steady or a slowly climbing state. If erosion from either wind or water is a concern, the current erosion prediction tool should be used to ensure that the erosion concern is addressed properly. Refer to the pasture and hayland planting standard or the forage harvest standard in the Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV for further management information.

Soil salinity problems can result from dryland saline seeps (caused by a perched water table resulting from clay hardpans or shale subsoil), improper drainage, or water management on irrigated soils, or cultivation of naturally saline soils. Soil salinity is strongly linked to water movement through the soil profile. These soils usually have a water table at 18 inches or less, which will greatly reduce the number of adapted plants. When sub-soil moisture containing salts moves upwards and evaporates, salts are precipitated at or near the soil surface. The solution to salinity problems lies in the prevention of upward salt movement; this requires such actions as utilization of existing soil moisture, the prevention of additional water moving into the system and/or site drainage. Drainage by tiling or ditching is generally not advised because of the potential for both surface and groundwater contamination. Changes in cultural practices can be effective. The use of deep-rooted perennial crops will also retard or prevent moisture movement into effected areas. On irrigated sites, irrigation water management is critical. Irrigation timing, duration, and the disposal of wastewater all influence the movement of salts.

FSG Documentation

Data References:

Agriculture Handbook 296 - Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas
Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Water and Climate Center (NWCC)
National Soil Survey Center, National Soil Information System (NASIS)
National Range and Pasture Handbook
Natural Resources Conservation Service, Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)
Various Agriculture Research Service (ARS), Cooperative Extension Service (CES), and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) information on plant trials for adaptation and production.
"Dryland Pastures in Montana and Wyoming" Species and Cultivars, Seeding Techniques and Grazing Management, Montana State University, EB19

State Correlation:

This site has been correlated with the following states:

Forage Suitability Group Approval:

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